

Message Text

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TO AMEMBASSY LISBON

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 254282

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS:ELAB, PINT PO

SUBJECT: MINISTRY OF LABOR CIRCULATING DRAFT UNION DECREE

LAW FOR COMMENT

REFERENCE: LISBON 5013

1. IN DEPARTMENT'S VIEW THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A UNITARY
LABOR CONFEDERATION UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES WOULD BE A
MAJOR STEP TOWARD ENSURING COMMUNIST CONTROL OF PORTUGUESE
LABOR MOVEMENT. THIS STEP WOULD MEAN AMONG OTHER THINGS
THAT IT WOULD BE DIFFICULT IF NOT IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE
INTERNATIONAL TRADE SECRETARIATS TO BRING FREE LABOR'S
INFLUENCE TO BEAR IN PORTUGAL AS SUGGESTED BY THE EMBASSY.
ANY ASSISTANCE PROVIDED BY THE ITS'S OR OTHER DEMOCRATICALLY
ORIENTED LABOR MOVEMENTS WOULD NO DOUBT EVENTUALLY GO TO
BENEFIT THE CONTROLLING COMMUNIST GROUP IF THE PROPOSAL WERE
TO BE ENACTED.

2. IN VIEW OF POTENTIAL SERIOUSNESS THIS STEP, REQUEST
EMBASSY TO FIND WAY TO MAKE DEPARTMENT'S VIEWS KNOWN TO
AS MANY INFLUENTIAL LEADERS WITHIN PORTUGUESE GOVERNMENT
AND COORDINATING COMMITTEE OF THE ARMED FORCES MOVEMENT
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AS POSSIBLE. EMBASSY MAY POINT TO ADVANTAGE OF PLURALISTIC

DEVELOPMENT AT THIS STAGE WHICH WOULD PROVIDE MORE REPRESENTATIVE LABOR LEADERSHIP. A DECISION AT THIS TIME ON A DEFINITE FORM OF ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE WOULD INHIBIT THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ORGANIZATION RESPONSIVE TO PORTUGAL'S CIRCUMSTANCES AND NEEDS. FINALLY, THE HISTORY OF EUROPEAN LABOR SINCE WORLD WAR II DOCUMENTS THE PROBLEMS WHICH A

COUNTRY FACES IF THE LABOR MOVEMENT IS IN COMMUNIST HANDS.

3. EMBASSY MAY ALSO REFER, IF APPROPRIATE, TO WHOLLY PREDICTABLE PRESSURES AND PROPAGANDA FROM THOSE IN CONTROL OF INTERSINDICAL FOR UNITED FORM OF LABOR ORGANIZATION. OBVIOUSLY, IT PROVIDES THEM MEANS TO CONSOLIDATE THEIR POLITICAL POWER. IT MAY BE NOTED THAT THERE ARE SERIOUS DOUBTS ELSEWHERE IN EUROPE OVER MERITS OF UNITED LABOR ORGANIZATION IN WHICH COMMUNISTS WOULD BE DOMINANT. THE DELAY IN ITALIAN UNIFICATION, ORIGINALLY SCHEDULED FOR 1972, REFLECTS GENUINE DOUBTS AND RESERVATIONS OVER MERITS OF UNIFICATION AND IMPLICIT CONCERN OF DEMOCRATIC FORCES TO MAINTAIN THEIR IDENTITY WHEN COMMUNIST WOULD BE PREDOMINANT SINGLE FORCE. THESE CONCERNS WOULD IN TIME-- IF NOT ALREADY--BE SHARED BY SIMILAR FORCES IN PORTUGAL.

4. WE RECOGNIZE THIS IS HISTORIC POINT IN PORTUGUESE DEVELOPMENT. MOMENT CALLS FOR PRUDENCE NOT FINAL COMMITMENTS. DECISION FOR UNITED MOVEMENT WOULD BE PRACTICALLY IRREVOCABLE WHILE DECISION TO POSTPONE ACTION GAINS TIME FOR EVOLUTION, EXPERIENCE AND MORE INFORMED EFFORT. LANGUAGE OF DOCUMENT, HOWEVER TECHNICAL, WOULD BE OF GREAT INFLUENCE, ONCE ADOPTED, AND ITSELF WOULD HELP SHAPE DEVELOPMENTS.

5. WE WOULD HOPE THAT THE GOVERNMENT MIGHT SEE ITS WAY CLEAR TO RECONSIDERING THE CONTEMPLATED ACTION TO ESTABLISH A UNITARY LABOR CONFEDERATION BY LAW, PARTICULARLY IF IT WILL BE UNDER COMMUNIST CONTROL.

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